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ABSTRACT

Upper-level elementary classroom teachers can integrate wordless picture books (usually used only in the lower elementary grades) with the Jigsaw approach to cooperative learning. Students are first assigned to heterogeneously-balanced "home teams." Members of the home team write a story to accompany a picture book, usually in about 15 to 30 minutes. Story titles from each home team are placed into a container. Students then form "expert teams," which include one member from each home team. The teacher draws one story title from the container. The one home team member in each group who participated in writing the story then retells it to the team members, who take notes in preparation for retelling the story themselves. Teachers can then decide to: (1) have the members of the expert teams who listened to the story recreate it through oral discussion or a writing exercise; or (2) have the expert groups retell the story and have the home team that actually wrote the story decide which group best retold the story. Through the use of this strategy, the classroom teacher effectively promotes all four areas of the language arts: writing, reading, listening, and oral communication skills, and offers an opportunity for students to use notetaking and outlining skills. (A figure indicating the formation of home and expert groups is attached.) (RS)

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Jigsawing With Wordless Picture Books

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Jigsawing With Wordless Picture Books

Wordless picture books are usually found in primary grade classroom libraries. Teachers who frequently use wordless picture books with their curriculum do so to stimulate language growth in speaking, reading, and writing activities (Degler, 1979). It is rare for a wordless picture book to have printed text; wordless picture books make use of illustrations to tell a story. The illustrations found in most wordless picture books are minutely detailed, often depicting clever and entertaining tales. It is also common for wordless picture book illustrations to present several levels of understanding.

Some upper-level elementary classroom teachers might consider wordless picture books inappropriate because the books do not require students to read text. However, older, more sophisticated readers in most elementary grade classrooms will more fully appreciate the unexpected twists on familiar tales found in some wordless picture books (McGee & Tompkins, 1983).

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy employed when teachers want students to learn new material through a team learning approach (Aronson, Stephan, Sikes, Blaney & Snapp, 1978). The basic premise behind this strategy is that of giving students an opportunity to share what has been learned, hear what others

have to say, and teach and be taught by peers. Jigsaw is also designed to increase students' sense of responsibility for their own learning and that of others. Not only do students have an opportunity to learn assigned material, they can also share and teach that same material to other team members. Using this approach in an elementary classroom increases oral communication and develops listening skills. These skills are desired in most whole language learning environments and desired in the life-long process of learning and socialization.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce one strategy that upper level elementary classroom teachers could use to effectively integrate wordless picture books into their language arts curriculum. This strategy also offers an activity for the upper level elementary classroom teacher wanting to encourage cooperation and collaboration among students.

When integrating wordless picture books with the Jigsaw approach to cooperative learning, the teacher first assigns each student in the classroom to a team. Henceforth, this team will be referred to as the home team. Each team should represent a cross-section of the class. In this way, all teams will be heterogenously balanced, and no team will have an advantage over another (Tierney, Readence, & Dishner, 1990).

Each home team should have an opportunity to chose a wordless

picture book from selections that have been introduced to the students. The home team might vote on their selection, or the team leader could make the selection. After a wordless picture book has been selected by the home team, the team, as a group, creates a story based on the illustrations found in the book. Team members listen carefully and take notes, or create an outline, as the story unfolds. Team members will use notes or the outline in a subsequent step to help them retell their team's story.

As the home teams write, the teacher moves from team to team offering suggestions to reinforce notetaking or outlining skills that have previously been taught. Active teacher involvement helps to keep each team on task. When each home team has titled their story on a piece of paper, the paper is folded and placed in a small container. The writing step usually requires 15 to 30 minutes.

Upon completion of the writing activity, home teams disperse into new groups called expert teams with one member from each home team making up each expert team. During this transition, the teacher collects the wordless picture books and places the books in an area where they will be readily available. The teacher then selects one story title from the container and announces the name of the story that is to be retold. Each member of the home team

that wrote the story of choice retells the story to other expert team members. Students are expected to use notes or the outline to aid in giving an accurate account of the story events. During this story sharing process, expert team members who are not storytelling, are to take notes or create an outline of the story. This step is necessary as the expert team members who are listening to the story will also be expected to retell the story.

In the final step, students return to their home teams. Teachers now can choose from two activities to draw the strategy to closure. One activity involves the teacher having the students who were listeners, not storytellers, reconstruct the story through oral discussion, a writing exercise, or a combination of both. The home team of storytellers should have the opportunity of judging if their story has been properly retold.

The alternative activity involves each home team first comparing notes or outlines to review the story the students were told in their expert groups. After this short review, the home team, the team of storytellers, chooses another home team to retell their story. Each home team could be asked to best reconstruct the story. Afterwards, the home team of storytellers, should have the opportunity of judging if their story has been properly retold. The sequence of events, starting with forming the expert groups and choosing a story to be retold, could be

repeated or the activity could be brought to a close. An extension activity would involve the storytellers sharing their stories with other students in the school. An example would be having the class vote on their favorite story and having that home team sharing their story with a primary grade classroom.

Through the use of this strategy, the classroom teacher will be able to effectively promote all four areas of the language arts: (a) writing skills, (b) reading skills, (c) listening skills, and (d) oral communication skills, as well as offer an opportunity for students to use notetaking and outlining skills.

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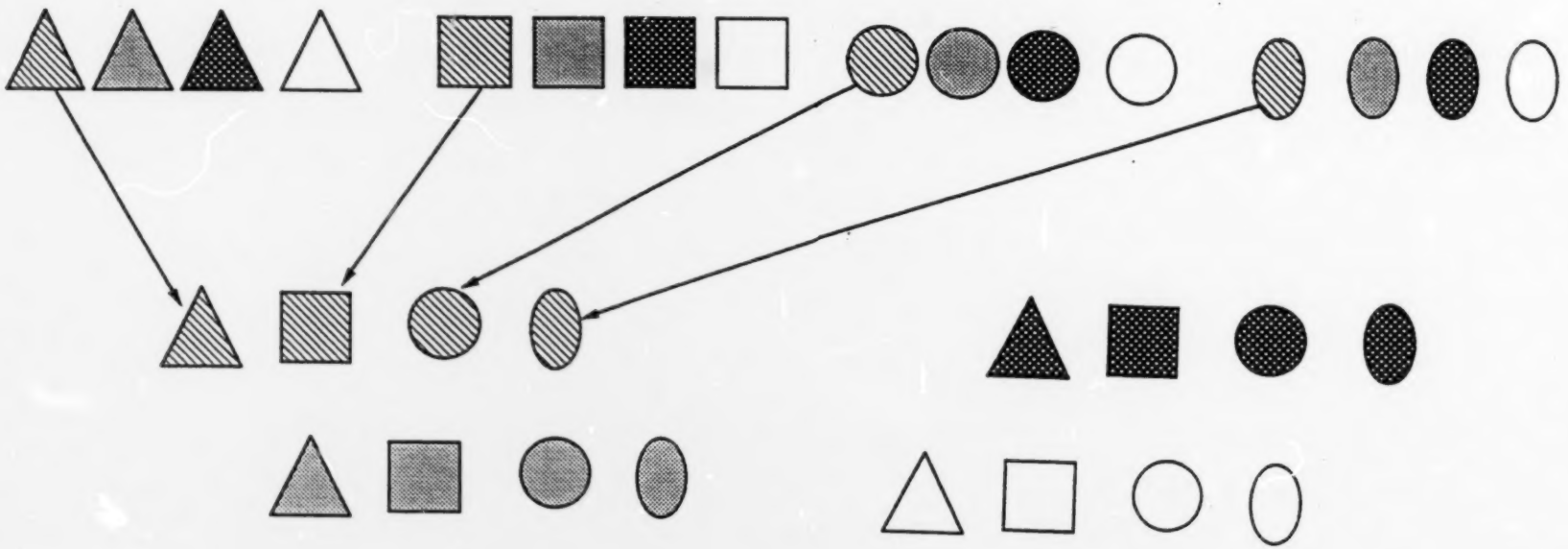

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